

# Shardmind

Character Race Option

*Bundled tightly in furs with his lantern held high, the gnome could feel his teeth chitter against the cold. From somewhere far above, outside the darkness of the cave in which he has found himself, water leaks in, pouring rivulets down the wall, dancing in a soft staccato as their falling droplets find pools along the ground.*

*A few paces behind, at perhaps a respectful distance, looms a second figure. Soft, rose-colored incandescence emanates from the figure's form, lending life to the running water of the cave as it continues its descent alongside the pair. The light of the lantern gleams off the multifaceted red gemstone that makes up this second figure, flickering against its placid, calm, featureless mask of a face.*

*"It's up ahead," the gnome hisses out a harsh whisper, "You'll know when you see it. Maybe you can make some sense of what it is."*

*I can only hope, replies a voice as calm and clear as crystal, directly into the gnome's mind, Be on your guard, should I be correct.*

*Weeks of practice allow the gnome to stifle a shudder at the communication, at thoughts not his own appearing in his mind. He still finds it uncanny, he supposes, but his strange companion doesn't seem to be a bad sort.*

*Far forward in the depths, the cave opens up into an immense cavern, and the dancing light of the lantern plays off a colossal wall. Ancient, metallic, with symbols the gnome has never seen elsewhere.*

*"We're here," grunts the gnome, setting the light down gingerly at his feet. He runs a single, weathered hand along the metalwork, "Been working with metal and cogs my whole life, never seen a thing like this."*

*Faster than he can think, his companion is at his side, mirroring his action, running its hand against the wall, its expressionless face appearing almost thoughtful.*

*It is as I have feared, the crystalline figure echoes into the mind of the gnome, It is a vessel. Mind flayer. Crashed, from the height of their empire. Forgotten. But not yet dead.*

*The words linger in the gnome's mind, but his ears pick up sounds. A scuffle. A slow, arduous scraping of nails against metal. Then silence. Only the trickling of water.*

*A thunderclap, bursting against his eardrums. Enormous, undeniable. The wall rattles. Someone, something, wants out.*

*It would now be wise to draw your weapon, intones his companion, as the crystal of its right arm flows into the shape of a sharpened blade.*

Formed after the destruction of the Living Gate, a divine construction that once imprisoned the worst horrors of the multiverse, shardminds are beings of psionic power animating the crystal shards that make up their form. Each shardmind that awakens continues the legacy of the Living Gate, however they may choose to do so.

## **Crystallized Thought**

Each shardmind is composed of the sentient, crystalline pieces of the Living Gate, and typically have a green, white, amber, or red coloration throughout their whole body. Shardminds stand roughly 6 feet tall and weigh about 180-230 pounds.

As a shardmind awakens from its constituent crystal shards, it fashions itself a form best suited for interaction with the world. As such, shardminds have a humanoid shape, yet have nearly-featureless

faces with two glowing eyes which gently emit a psionic radiance from within. Though shardminds have no need for clothing, they sometimes adopt rudimentary garb made of simple, unadorned fabrics.

### **Logic and Emotion**

When it existed, the Living Gate was composed of sentient thoughtforms as much as actual, crystal matter, designed to be an effective safeguard against the nightmare creatures of the Far Realms. The Gate was always able to shift forms, or to intuitively adopt new strategies to counter the insidious forces that would try to break through.

These thoughtforms live on inside shardminds, endlessly reincarnated and mixed about when one shardmind dies, and another cluster of forgotten shards animates. Every animated shardmind is a new individual, and each experiences the world differently.

As creatures of psionic energy, shardminds trend towards both logical thought and emotional extremes. Shardminds can seem calculating and emotionless at first, but they simply do not experience smaller emotions. A shardmind is never merely irritated, saddened, or content, and they only show emotion once they are outraged, sorrowful, or overjoyed.

### **Inheritors of the Gate**

Each shardmind carries within it an ancestral memory of the Living Gate, and holds at least a small motivation to continue its purpose. This can take many forms, and each shardmind has a distinct approach to how they continue the Gate's legacy.

Some shardminds simply hunt aberrant creatures of the Far Realms wherever they may be found, while others journey to collect pieces of the Gate that have not yet awakened, in hopes of rebuilding it. Many simply focus on improving their prowess, knowing that their power is the Gate's power. And yet other shardminds, spoken of in whispers, maraud in search of other shardminds to kill, reckoning that only when every shardmind is dead, will the Living Gate be reformed.

### **Shardminds without the Living Gate**

While the Living Gate gives shardminds a compelling motivation and reason to exist, it is not appropriate to all settings. Your DM may decide that the Living Gate is not a part of their setting, but decide to include shardminds anyway.

In such a situation, shardminds may be the remnants of spells, which are magically animating natural crystals. Shardminds could be intentionally created by wizards, or could be lost souls claiming any form that will support them. Finally, shardminds could even be a self-sufficient race in their own right, forming communities and mining crystals to imbue with thought, in order to perpetuate themselves.

### **Shardmind Names**

Shardminds tend to name themselves, often choosing names that match the auditory emanations of the psionic field that binds their individual form together. As they create themselves in the rough image of other living beings, shardminds can have any gender identity (or none at all), and yet do not have a biological sex. Regardless, shardmind names do not fall along gender lines.

**Names:** Aahoraa, Alarr, Bruaa, Crendx, Freen, Haum, Jjrin, Kylax, Lvivv, Mrn, Olo, Qiin, Rrixx, Siliuss, Trniv, Urivuu, Viun, Xyll

## **Shardmind Traits**

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Intelligence score increases by 2, and your choice of either your Wisdom or Charisma score increases by 1.

**Age.** As a construct, you do not age in a traditional sense and can not die of old age.

**Alignment.** Shardminds are typically born into the world as a moral blank slate, and trend strongly towards neutrality. However, the opposition of the former Living Gate to the chaos of the Far Realms also causes many shardminds to lean towards being lawful.

**Size.** The concentration of psionic crystal necessary to create self awareness results in a roughly human-sized form. You are size Medium.

**Speed.** Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

**Languages.** You cannot speak without using telepathy, but you can understand, read, and write Common, Deep Speech, and one other language of your choice.

**Telepathy.** You can communicate via two-way telepathy with any creature that is within 30 feet of you, if that creature knows at least one language.

**Living Construct.** The psionic crystal that makes up your form is both inorganic and yet imbued with life. You are immune to disease. You do not need to eat or breathe, but you can ingest food and drink if you wish. Additionally, you have two creature types: humanoid and construct. You can be affected by a spell or ability if it works on either of your creature types.

**Resonance.** You can use verbal components of spells, even if you do not speak, which manifests as a resonant, audible humming of your constituent shards. You can be affected by *silence* and similar as usual.

**Crystalline Body.** You are immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition.

**Natural Armor.** Your crystalline form is naturally resistant to being damaged. Your AC cannot be less than 14, but armor, spells, and other effects can make it higher.

**Luminescence.** Your shards glow with a soft inner radiance, and you naturally cast dim light in a radius of 5 feet around you. You can intentionally stifle this light and turn it off, or turn it back on, by using a bonus action.

**Shard Swarm.** On your turn, you can use a bonus action to break your body into its constituent crystals and then teleport to an unoccupied location you can see within 15 feet. Choose up to 3 creatures within 5 feet of your original location. The first attack made against each creature before the end of your next turn is made with advantage. Once you use this trait, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

## **Living Gate Lore**

For being such a fixture in the multiverse, the exact details of the creation of the Living Gate, its nature, and its demise are shrouded in mystery.

It is known that the Living Gate predates the existence of many of the gods, and that it once had a guardian that was neither primordial nor god, though kin to both. It is also said that the Gate was destroyed by a rogue god, one who had gone mad by peering into the Gate's depths. This god slew the guardian of the Living Gate, and sundered the Gate itself, ushering all manner of Far Realms horrors into the world.

Which god destroyed the Gate remains unknown, though some scholars credit Tharizdun, who later became known as the Elder Elemental Eye. Still, some hardened planar travelers whisper that it may have been Pelor himself that did the deed. Even now, they say, Pelor keeps the largest fragments of the Living Gate locked within a gigantic sun at the heart of his realm. For what end or purpose, they can only speculate.

## Additional Feats

If your DM allows the use of feats as described in chapter 6 of the *Player's Handbook*, a shardmind character has access to the following special feats.

### **Crystalline Arsenal**

*Prerequisite: Shardmind*

The substance of your body itself can be a weapon. As a bonus action, you can form the shards of your body to produce a weapon you have proficiency with, which appears in an unoccupied hand. After this weapon is out of your grasp for one round, or if you use another bonus action to dismiss it, the weapon deconstructs itself and re-integrates with the substance of your body.

When you form a weapon you can choose to empower it, and begin concentrating as if on a spell. If you do, the weapon is affected by a casting of *magic weapon* at its lowest possible spell level, lasting for up to one minute, until you lose concentration, or until you dismiss the weapon.

At 7th level, this becomes a 4th level casting of *magic weapon*. At 11th level, it becomes a 6th level casting. After you empower a weapon you form, you require a short or long rest before you can empower a weapon again.

### **Shard Magic**

*Prerequisite: Shardmind*

Your psionic potential is greater than others of your kind, giving you enhanced magics and control over your form. You know the *mage hand* and *magic stone* (XGtE 160, EEPG 20) cantrips. When you use *mage hand*, the spectral hand is invisible, and when you use *magic stone*, you can use fragments of your own body in place of the stones. You can also cast each of the following spells once with this ability: *detect thoughts*, *magic missile*, and *suggestion*.

When you first take this feat, choose from Charisma, Intelligence, or Wisdom as your spellcasting ability for these spells and cantrips. If a spell gained with this ability has a spell level, it is cast at 2nd level, and you regain the ability to cast it when you finish a long rest.